

From: Columbia Museum of Art

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Subject: The Columbia Museum of Art Announces First-Ever Retrospective of Treasured American Master - Charles Courtney Curran: Seeking the Ideal - On View February 20 through May 17, 2015

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PRESS RELEASE

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RELEASE

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**The Columbia Museum of Art Announces First-Ever Retrospective
of Treasured American Master**

Charles Courtney Curran: Seeking the Ideal

On View February 20 through May 17, 2015

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Charles Courtney Curran (American, 1861-1942) *Lotus Lilies of Lake Erie*, 1888,
Oil on canvas, 18 x 32 inches, Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J.
Terra Collection.

Columbia, S.C. - The Columbia Museum of Art presents *Charles Courtney Curran: Seeking the Ideal*, the first-ever museum retrospective of this treasured American painter, on view from February 20 through May 17, 2015. Charles Curran's heart was claimed by women, children and flowers, and he devoted a lifetime to painting them in the full light of day out of doors. "What normal human being," he wrote, "can see a garden full of flowers in bloom or a hillside sprinkled with nature's own decorations, the wild flowers, without an emotion of joy?" His goal as a painter was to capture that joy on canvas. *Seeking the Ideal* brings together 58 Curran masterpieces sure to astonish with their jewel-like color, soaring vistas and garden landscapes, and love for beauty.

The exhibition is organized by Dixon Gallery & Gardens in Memphis, Tenn., with the Frick Art and Historical Center in Pittsburgh, Pa., and the Columbia Museum of Art. The Columbia Museum of Art has three Curran paintings in its collection, one of which is traveling with the exhibition and included in the beautifully illustrated color catalogue. The show's curator, Jane Faquin, is a University of South Carolina alumna.

"We are excited to present the first major museum exhibition to focus on Curran's work and its role in furthering the American impressionist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries," says CMA Executive Director Karen Brosius. "Curran's paintings are full of sweeping beauty and are immaculately composed and detailed. They are among the finest American paintings of the era. We are very happy to be one of the very few museums in the country to have this exhibition."

Curran's career blossomed in the 1880s when French impressionism had changed the art world. Paintings became enlivened by outdoor light and color, and American artists responded to the innovations of impressionism. They, too, worked to capture the fleeting effects of atmosphere, but American artists also remained distinct in that they retained a sense of careful drawing and composition: Monet could dissolve trees into air, while Curran made them crisp against the sky. What they shared was a vivid palette and scintillating light in

their works. Admired by critics of his time and avidly collected to this day, Curran's work greatly contributed to help spread the impressionist tradition in America, and left a legacy of breathtaking canvases.

Working in the town of Cragmoor in the beautiful Hudson River Valley, Curran became a much-respected leader of the art colony there in the early decades of the 20th century. He was a prolific painter of pictures of young women silhouetted against brilliant blue skies, and of children set outdoors in lush gardens. These are wistful images, each one full of optimism and grace. He looked for what was ideal in American life and made it even more so.

"The paintings of Charles Courtney Curran are, first and foremost, beautiful," says CMA Chief Curator Will South. "He painted emerald hills, crystalline cloud-filled skies, and radiant women with consummate skill. Standing before them, we are both delighted and dazzled."

The CMA is the last venue of only three museums nationwide to host the exhibition. It is the final opportunity to see the selection of original works by this masterful American figure and landscape painter.

The exhibition is accompanied by 120-page, full-color, softcover catalogue, which includes a critical essay on Curran's life and work as well as individual entries on each of the works in the show. The book is available for purchase in the Museum Shop.

Curran's paintings are found in major museum collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

This exhibition is presented through the generosity of Presenting Sponsors: Susan and Darnall Boyd; Silver Sponsors: Kay and John Bachmann, Helen and John Hill; Bronze Sponsors: Dr. Gail M. Morrison, Virginia E. Newell and Robert H. Wilkins; and Friends of Curran Sponsors: Mr. and Mrs. David E. Dukes, Walda Wildman; and support also provided by Mr. and Mrs. James M. Myers.